Erebia ligea (Linnaeus, 1758). Nymphalidae. Arran Brown

Amongst the S.R. Pollard material was a store box of mixed British butterflies and moths, only some of which bore data. A single specimen of *Erebia ligea* in good condition but without data was also present. However, as a single specimen of another non-British European satyrid without data was also present, there are only tenuous grounds for assuming that this *E. ligea* was of British origin.

Spiris striata (Linnaeus, 1758). Arctiidae. Feathered Footman

A few store-boxes from the H. W. Dobson collection contained specimens that had not been labelled up individually but had written in pencil "All at Cloughton" and pencil lines demarking different date groups. One such box but just labelled "All [caught] at Cloughton" without any indication of dates contained a single specimen of *Spiris striata*. It is mounted on the same style of black pin as the rest of the material in the box and set in the same rather casual way. There is no reason to believe this is not of local origin. Cloughton is about five miles north of Scarborough and appears to be where H. W. Dobson lived.

I feel sure there are other items of interest awaiting discovery in this diverse collection if persons with a better grasp of the local distribution of macrolepidoptera than myself are willing to spend the time.

I am grateful to David Barbour, Gerry Tremewan and Mark Young for useful discussions about the *Zygaena exulans* specimen. My thanks also go to Scarborough Museum and to my colleague Graham Rotheray for giving me the opportunity to curate this interesting collection.– K. P. Bland, National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF.

Arboreal substrate for an egg-laying Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina* L. (Lep.: Nymphalidae)

During a survey on Alderley Edge, Cheshire, of biotope exploitation by *Maniola jurtina* L. and *Pyronia tithonus* L. (Nymphalidae, Satyrinae) in the sweltering conditions of 14 July 2003 with temperatures rising to 30°C, a female meadow brown was observed laying three eggs at 13.43 hours on an oak tree trunk 20cms above short grass at the base of the tree and whilst in shade of the tree. The eggs were all deposited on lichens growing on the tree trunk (aspect c. 250°), two in rapid succession in slightly different locations and the third ten seconds after the second at a nearby position. The tree is one of 11 located in a line at the base of hill slope meadow where the butterfly is abundant.

During the survey a number of meadow browns, both sexes, have been recorded within woodland. On 14 July, two were observed accessing open spots in the woodland by flying in complete shade under the dense pine and oak canopy. One male was engaged in intense patrolling mate location of last year's leaf litter in one small area under oak trees. During the long period of research on wing margin

ocellation in the butterfly by Ford and his colleagues (Ford, E. B. 1972 *Ecological genetics*. Methuen), the butterfly was considered incapable of penetrating vegetation barriers lacking suitable host plant biotope. However, occurrence in woodland is not atypical for the butterfly on Alderley Edge. In the detailed MRR study on Brereton Heath in 1987 meadow browns were frequently recorded flying over a woodland barrier and observed in the light birch woodland (Shreeve, T. G. et al. 1996, Uniformity of wing spotting of *Maniola jurtina* (L.) (Lep., Satyrinae) in relation to environmental heterogeneity. *Nota Lepidopterologica* 18: 77-92) and were also regularly observed in the woodland away from host plant locations in an earlier study on Alderley Edge (Cook, L. M. et al. 2001. Butterfly-host plant fidelity, vagrancy and a measurement of mobility from distribution maps. *Ecography*, 24: 497-504). In the nearby urban areas of Wilmslow and Sale, they are often seen outside their typical biotopes flying over cut grass, car parks and buildings. In hot sunny weather, it would appear that they are able to behave more like the butterfly in Mediterranean olive groves and Cypress woodland.– R. L. H. Dennis, 4 Fairfax Drive, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 6EY.

Unusual abundance of flies (Diptera) at a moth trap on a cold winter's evening

On a recording trip to the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust's nature reserve at Ashwell Chalk Quarry, in northern Hertfordshire, on the night of 2 November 2002, four moth traps were set up at various positions and the lights turned on at 16.30 hours. The temperature soon fell rapidly from the initial 15°C and light rain fell throughout the session; it was decidedly cold by 18.00 hours. A grand total of nine moths, comprising six species, was less than exciting and by 20.00 we were packed up and on the way home. However, whilst three of the lights produced just about nothing other than their share of the moths, one lamp, set in a small wooded area and adjacent to the entrance to a badger sett, was swarming with flies within half an hour of lighting up – and was still swarming at home time.

Two things led us to the conclusion that this was unusual. First, there was an exceptionally large number of flies – many more than normally expected at a light trap set in a chalk landscape and miles away from any wetland habitat. Second, although many Diptera hibernate as adults, the late date and the somewhat cold evening air were not really conditions under which large swarms of flies were expected. And I do mean swarms! There were dozens of them – to the extent that putting one's head inside the trap to look for moths on the egg trays was unpleasant, with flies getting behind spectacles and inside ears! A sample of the offending insects was collected using a large pooter, pinned and eventually dispatched to Laurence Clemons – who tells me that he actually likes these beasts! The list follows (the Syrphidae identified by myself, the rest by Laurence, to whom I am most grateful):